

New and unusual records of birds in Cameroon

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Received 2 September 1995

During a visit to Cameroon in November–December 1993 seven species new to the country were recorded, including two afrotropical species (Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur*, Fire-bellied Woodpecker *Thripas pyrrhogaster*) and five palaeartic bird species (Imperial Eagle *Aguila heliaca*, Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*). These records, together with a series of range extensions and other notable records, are dealt with in the following.

One week was spent in northern Cameroon with three full days in and around Waza NP (acacia savannah) and 1½ day in Bénoué NP (woodland savanna). The remaining 2½ weeks were spent in southwestern Cameroon with 5 days at Mount Kupé (mountain forest), 7 days in and around Korup NP (lowland rainforest) and three brief visits to the mangrove coast of the Gulf of Guinea (twice at Douala and once south of Korup NP).

A significant part of the notable records are from either the north or the coast. These were the areas where the shortest times were spent, and it seems that only little ornithological work has been done in these areas during the early dry season. Most of the records concern palaeartic winter visitors, which only made up about 15% of the 462 species recorded during the visit. These are species that we are familiar with from extensive field-work in Europe and the Middle East and it seems likely that their occurrence in Cameroon has been overlooked in the past.

The sequence and nomenclature follow Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993).

PINK-BACKED PELICAN *Pelecanus rufescens*

20 at La Digue (Douala) on 21 Nov and 24 at the mangroves S of Korup NP on 5 Dec. Louette (1981) gives only March to July as the period of known occurrence of the species on the coast.

WHITE-BACKED NIGHT HERON *Gorsachius leuconotus*

One adult bird seen at dusk flying up the Bénoué River in Bénoué NP on 18 Nov. The species was probably heard at the same place after dusk the following evening. Louette (1981) describes the species as confined to the equatorial forest, and therefore this seems to be the first record from the woodland savanna in Cameroon.

BLACK EGRET *Egretta ardesiaca*

Three seen together in the interior part of the mangrove S of Korup on 5 Dec. This is the first record from the coast of Cameroon. Louette

(1981) describes the species as sparsely distributed in northern Cameroon only. Brown *et al.* (1982) describe it as common along coasts in West Africa, but their distribution map of the species excludes Cameroon.

WESTERN REEF HERON *Egretta gularis*

Seen on all three visits to the coast. At La Digue (Douala) five white-phase birds were seen on 21 Nov, and four white-phase and four dark-phase on 6 Dec; in the mangroves S of Korup NP one white-phase and eight dark-phase birds on 5 Dec. Apparently late records, or perhaps the species can be found all year round. Louette (1981) describes it as a regular bird at the coast during the period March to September only.

YELLOW-BILLED HERON *Egretta intermedia*

One was seen in the mangrove S of Korup NP on 5 Dec, and one at La Digue (Douala) on 6 Dec. The first records from the coast in Cameroon. Louette (1981) reports the species as limited to the inundation area in northern Cameroon. It is known from the West African coast west of Cameroon (Brown *et al.* 1982).

GOLIATH HERON *Ardea goliath*

One observed at Bénoué NP on 19 Nov. Apparently an early record as Louette (1981) describes the species as a dry season visitor from December to March.

HAMERKOP *Scopus umbretta*

One seen at La Digue (Douala) on 21 Nov; one at Mundemba (Korup NP) on 4 Dec, and 26 in the mangrove S of Korup NP on 5 Dec. These observations contradict the statement by Louette (1981) that the species is present on the coast only from January to June and then apparently leaves the country to the west. Rodewald *et al.* (1994) report the species throughout the year from Korup NP.

AFRICAN OPENBILL STORK *Anastomus lamelligerus*

34 at the Bénoué River near Garoua on 11 Nov; three at Waza NP on 16 Nov; eight on Plaine du Tchad north of Waza NP on Nov 17. Louette (1981) mentions the species as a rainy season visitor only in the north, hence these early dry season observations seem to be unusual.

GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus*

Six seen at the Bénoué River at Garoua on 6 Nov; another 15 seen on Plaine du Tchad north of Waza NP on 17 Nov. These records are early, since Louette (1981) reports that the species occurs in the north only from January to April.

NORTHERN PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

One seen between Maroua and Waza on 14 Nov. Robertson (1992) suggests that the record of up to 50 Pintails from Waza in Dec 1990 was the first for Cameroon south of Lake Chad; but in 1987 up to 16,000

Pintails were found on Lake Maga (10°30'N, 15°10'E) east of Waza NP (Monval & Pirot 1989). The species is very numerous at Lake Chad and the scarcity of records is likely to indicate only the lack of recent ornithological activities.

NORTHERN SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

Four seen in Waza NP on 4 Nov. This is only the third record from Cameroon (Robertson 1992 & *in litt.*), but being a fairly frequent winter visitor at Lake Chad (Monval & Pirot 1989) the species is likely to be regular in northern Cameroon.

FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca*

One female seen in Waza NP on 15 Nov. Louette (1981) observed several hundreds in Waza in January 1976, but recent records are likely to be few due to the significant decline in the world population (Monval & Pirot 1989).

EGYPTIAN VULTURE *Neophron percnopterus*

Recorded on two days in Waza NP: ten on 15 Nov and five on 16 Nov. These records, together with those of Thiollay (1978) and Robertson (1992), indicate that the species must be regarded as regular at Waza at least in the dry season.

RÜPPELL'S GRIFFON *Gyps rueppellii*

The species is common in Waza NP and breeds on the cliffs at the park entrance. We also observed two pairs attending nests in tops of Acacia trees, with an apparently brooding bird present in the one of the nests. This may indicate that tree-nesting does occur in this species, although doubted by Brown *et al.* (1982).

WESTERN BANDED SNAKE EAGLE *Circaetus cinerascens*

One seen at Bénoué NP on 20 Nov. The few records from Cameroon are all from the savanna zone (Louette 1981, Robertson 1992).

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Two on 15 Nov and four on 16 Nov in Waza NP; seven on Plaine du Tchad north of Waza NP on 17 Nov; and one male between Garoua and Bénoué NP on 18 Nov. Contrary to Louette (1981), Thiollay (1978) found the species to be frequent in the north and Robertson (1992) showed that it is regular over a wide area of Cameroon. Our observations also indicate that it is of regular occurrence in the north.

PALLID HARRIER *Circus macrourus*

One male and one female/immature between Garoua and Maroua on 14 Nov. Single juveniles seen in Waza NP on 15 and 17 Nov. Louette (1981) describes the species as common in the north, but like Thiollay (1978) and Robertson (1992) we found it to be less common than Montagu's Harrier.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*

Six seen (2 males, one melanistic phase) between Mora and Waza on 14 Nov. Up to 20 (mainly males) per day in Waza NP on 15–17 Nov. Like Thiollay (1978) and Robertson (1992) we found this species to be the commonest harrier in northern Cameroon—contrary to Louette (1981).

LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo rufinus*

One seen on 15 Nov and another two on 16 Nov in Waza NP, and a single bird between Waza and Maroua on 18 Nov. Louette (1981) knew only the observations by Thiollay (1978) and believed the species to be uncommon in northern Cameroon.

AUGUR BUZZARD *Buteo augur*

An adult female of ssp. *augur* was seen in acacia savanna north of Bénoué NP along the road to Garoua on 20 Nov. This is the first record in Cameroon of this distinctive buzzard from East Africa; the nearest breeding areas of the species (and subspecies) are about 1600 km away in eastern Sudan or northeastern Zaire (Brown *et al.* 1982).

WAHLBERG'S EAGLE *Aquila wahlbergi*

One seen at Mt. Kupé on 23 Nov. Louette (1981) only mentions the species from the savanna zone, but it is known from Mt. Kupé (Chris Bowden pers. comm.)

[LESSER SPOTTED EAGLE *Aquila pomarina*]

None seen despite careful check of all *Aquila* eagles in Waza NP and Bénoué NP (in total 15 *A. rapax*, one *A. heliaca* and five *A. wahlbergi*). The lack of records supports the conclusion of Christensen & Sørensen (1989), who question a claimed winter-area for the species in northern Cameroon/southern Chad (Vielliard 1972, Thiollay 1978). If the species did occur in northern Cameroon as a winter visitor its presence was to be expected at the time of our visit in mid-November. The Lesser Spotted Eagle, a transequatorial migrant, passes through the Middle East in late September–early October and arrives in its well documented winter-area in southern Africa in October (Christensen & Sørensen *op. cit.*).

IMPERIAL EAGLE *Aquila heliaca*

An immature seen in Waza NP on 17 Nov. This is the first record for Cameroon, and from sub-Saharan Africa west of Sudan.

AFRICAN HAWK EAGLE *Hieraetus spilogaster*

Two adults together at Bénoué NP on 20 Nov. There are very few records from Cameroon (Louette 1981, Robertson 1992).

BOOTED EAGLE *Hieraetus pennatus*

Three (two light-phase, one dark-phase) on 15 Nov and two (both light-phase) on 17 Nov in Waza NP. One light-phase between Waza NP and Maroua on 18 Nov. There are only few previous documented

records from Cameroon (Thiollay 1978, Robertson 1992) and they are all from the north around Waza NP, where this species must be regarded as a regular winter visitor.

LESSER KESTREL *Falco naumanni*

A male on Plaine du Tchad north of Waza NP on 17 Nov. Louette (1981) claimed a complete lack of definite records in Cameroon and this led Robertson (1992) to list a record as the second from Cameroon as he knew of one earlier record. In fact Thiollay (1978) had already recorded the species, and estimated that more than 10% of the kestrels recorded during his raptor survey in northern Cameroon belonged to this species (out of a total of 331 birds).

LANNER *Falco biarmicus*

One at Nyasoso (Mt. Kupé) on 22 Nov. Louette (1981) mentions only one record outside the savanna zone. However, Holyoak & Seddon (1990) point out that the species is frequent in the montane region in western Cameroon.

BARBARY FALCON *Falco pelegrinoides*

An adult seen south of Waza on 17 Nov; the second record from Cameroon. Robertson (1992) photographed an adult at Waza on 20 Dec 1990.

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

200 seen on a mudflat in the mangroves S of Korup NP on 5 Dec; a high number for Cameroon and an unusual site. The species is not mentioned from the coast of Cameroon in Urban *et al.* (1986); Louette (1981) mentions it as rare in Cameroon with one record on the coast and a few in the north.

ROCK PRATINCOLE *Glareola nuchalis*

Two showing characters of ssp. *nuchalis* seen day-roosting on rocks in the river at Korup NP on 4 Dec. They were seen at close range and showed a well-defined white hindneck-collar without any rufous. The subspecies from western Cameroon is supposed to be *liberiae*, with a chestnut hindneck-collar (Urban *et al.* 1986), but Louette (1981) considered most specimens from western Cameroon to be intermediates, being closest to nominate *nuchalis*.

WHITE-FRONTED PLOVER *Charadrius marginatus*

Two at the Bénoué River in Bénoué NP on 19 Nov. The few inland records in Cameroon are all from the Bénoué plain (Louette 1981, Robertson 1992).

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

One seen in Waza NP on 16 Nov and a flock of 14 at the Bénoué River at Garoua on 18 Nov. Louette (1981) described the species as common near Lake Chad but otherwise only known from a few records from the coast.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Singles seen at La Digue (Douala) on 21 Nov and 6 Dec. Louette (1981) mentions that there are only few records from Cameroon.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

One seen on Plaine du Tchad north of Waza on 17 Nov. Few records are known from Cameroon, all from the north (Louette 1981, Robertson 1992).

MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatilis*

Two seen at the Bénoué River at Garoua on 18 Nov; one on a mudflat in the mangroves S of Korup NP on 5 Dec. Louette (1981) mentions one specimen from the coast and a few other records elsewhere.

TEREK SANDPIPER *Xenus cinereus*

An adult seen at the Bénoué River at Garoua on 13 Nov; the first record from Cameroon. Urban *et al.* (1986) mention only few previous records from West Africa and they are all from the Sahel zone (Senegambia, Mali, N. Nigeria, Chad).

RUDDY TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

One seen at La Digue (Douala) on 21 Nov. Louette (1981) mentions only one previous record from the coast.

BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER *Limicola falcinellus*

A juvenile seen on the mudflats at la Digue (Douala) on 21 Nov; the first record from Cameroon and the first from the coast of West Africa. Urban *et al.* (1986) mention four records from the Sahel (two Mali, one Nigeria and one Chad). There is a recent record from the coast of Gabon (Christy 1990).

BLACK-HEADED/SLENDER-BILLED GULL *Larus ridibundus/genei*

One in winter plumage on 6 Dec at La Digue (Douala). The bird was too distant for proper identification to species. There are two records of *L. ridibundus* from Cameroon (Robertson 1993).

GULL-BILLED TERN *Sterna nilotica*

One seen in the mangroves S of Korup NP on 5 Dec. The first record from the coast in Cameroon. Louette (1981) mentions only a few records from northern Cameroon. The species is known from the West African coast west of Cameroon (Urban *et al.* 1986).

ROYAL TERN *Sterna maxima*

300 on 21 Nov and 900 on 6 Dec at La Digue (Douala); 600 in the mangroves S of Korup NP on 5 Dec. The numbers from both localities classify these as of international importance (>500 birds) for the West African population (Rose & Scott 1994). As we only visited a fraction of the mangroves in Cameroon, they are likely to be a very important wintering area for the afrotropical population.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

One seen at La Digue (Douala) on 21 Nov. Louette (1981) mentions only records from March to July.

WHISKERED TERN *Chlidonias hybridus*

At the Bénoué River at Garoua the species was seen on all three visits: 90 on 13 Nov, 12 on 18 Nov and 9 on 9 Dec. A single was seen between Garoua and Bénoué NP on 18 Nov. Louette (1981) does not mention records from Cameroon, but there are a few recent observations (Keen 1993).

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN *Chlidonias leucopterus*

50 seen at the Bénoué River at Garoua on 13 Nov. Louette (1981) only mentions records from Lake Chad, where the species is very common.

CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE *Pterocles exustus*

Ten on 15 Nov and seven on 14 Nov in Waza NP. Four came to drink from a sandbank in the Bénoué river at Bénoué NP on 19 Nov. Louette (1981) knew only one observation from Cameroon, but Robertson (1992) found the species to be the commonest sandgrouse in Waza NP with up to 200 per day. The record at Bénoué NP represents a major southward extension of the occurrence of the species.

EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

Two on 15 Nov and 75 on 16 Nov in Waza NP; 100+ at Plaine du Tchad north of Waza on 17 Nov. There are few autumn records of the species from Cameroon; it is undoubtedly under-recorded.

ADAMAWA TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia hypopyrrha*

Nine at Bénoué NP on 18 Nov, in small flocks along the road during the late afternoon. In Cameroon this restricted-range species is known from the Adamawa plateau and the Bénoué plain, but there are few records (Louette 1981, Robertson 1992).

RED-EYED DOVE *Streptopelia semitorquata*

Singles at the Bénoué River at Garoua and north of Garoua on 13 Nov. Five at 50–55 km north of Garoua on 14 Nov. Louette (1981) mentions only one record from the Bénoué plain.

RED-FRONTED PARROT *Poicephalus gulielmi*

One at Nguti and four near Baro on 28 Nov. Both records are from western Cameroon, where Louette (1981) mentions that the species may be absent. Rodewald *et al.* (1994) report the species as uncommon in Korup NP.

SENEGAL PARROT *Poicephalus senegalus*

One in Waza NP on 16 Nov may be the first record from the Park, where Louette (1981), however, presumed the species to occur.

EUROPEAN CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

One at Mt. Kupé on 25 Nov. There are few records from Cameroon (Louette 1981) and this is the first from Mt. Kupé (C. Bowden pers. comm.).

WOODLAND KINGFISHER *Halcyon senegalensis*

One on 18 Nov and two on 19 Nov at Bénoué NP. The records may be a little late, as Louette (1981) states that the species occurs in the north only during the rains (July–October).

BROAD-BILLED ROLLER *Eurystomus glaucurus*

Two on 18 Nov and four on 19 Nov at Bénoué NP. Louette (1981) does not report the species from northern Cameroon outside the rainy season (July–October).

BLACK-AND-WHITE-CASQUED HORNBILL *Ceratogymna subcylindricus*

One between Kumba and Nguti on 27 Nov. Rodewald *et al.* (1994) mention one previous record from western Cameroon.

WILCOCK'S HONEYGUIDE *Indicator willcocksi*

One between Garoua and Maroua on 14 Nov. Louette (1981) mentions only one previous Cameroonian record of the species in dry woodland in the north.

LITTLE SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Campethera cailliautii*

A female seen in the northern part of Korup NP on 1 Dec, and a male in secondary forest near Baro on 2 Dec. This is the first record for Korup NP, but there are records from the nearby Rumpi Hills (Rodewald *et al.* 1994).

BROWN-EARED WOODPECKER *Campethera caroli*

One seen west of Baro in the northern part of Korup NP on 29 Nov. Louette (1981) had records only east of Mt. Cameroon, but the species is mentioned as rare in the northern part of Korup by Rodewald & Green (1993).

FIRE-BELLIED WOODPECKER *Thripias pyrrhogaster*

In a stand of trees in secondary forest near Baro outside the Korup NP the species was recorded on three days: a male on 28 Nov, two (one male) on 2 Dec and a male on 3 Dec. The records confirm the occurrence of the species in Cameroon. Two old records from Mt. Cameroon of this lowland forest species from West Africa were accepted by Louette (1981) but rejected by Fry *et al.* (1988). Rodewald *et al.* (1994) mention the species as hypothetical in Korup NP. It is interesting to note that we recorded its allospecies, the Yellow-crested Woodpecker *T. xantholophus*, at a nest-hole in the same stand of trees at Baro.

SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella brachydactyla*

One bird was seen feeding on bare ground in Waza NP on 17 Nov. This is the second record from Cameroon, the first being a specimen

collected at Efulen on 24 October 1926 (Louette 1981). The species is a widespread winter visitor in the northern part of the Sahel zone (Keith *et al.* 1992).

EUROPEAN SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

100 over the Bénoué River at Garoua on 13 Nov; one north of Garoua on 14 Nov; 160 on 15 Nov and 100 on 16 Nov in Waza NP; a single on Plaine du Tchad north of Waza on 17 Nov; and 90 between Garoua and Bénoué NP on 18 Nov. Louette (1981) presumed that this migrant is widespread in Cameroon, but stated that definite records were few.

MOSQUE SWALLOW *Hirundo senegalensis*

Two seen in Waza NP on 16 Nov are apparently the first records in the north of Cameroon. Louette (1981) expected the arid-country subspecies *senegalensis* to be found in the north due to nearby records in both Nigeria and Chad. Another subspecies, *saturnator*, is found from the Adamawa plateau southward (Louette 1981).

AFRICAN ROCK MARTIN *Hirundo fuligula*

Six over a boulder-strewn hill about 25 km N of Maroua on 18 Nov probably represent the first record in northern Cameroon. Louette (1981) expected the species to be found there, but did not know of any records.

WIRE-TAILED SWALLOW *Hirundo smithii*

Four over a dried-out riverbed in Bénoué NP on 19 Nov. This is a northward extension of the known occurrence of the species in Cameroon. Louette (1981) knew of no records north of the Adamawa plateau, but Mahé (1988) mentions the species as common in Bénoué NP in February 1987.

BLACK-HEADED WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava feldegg*

Two individuals of the black-headed race *feldegg* were recorded in Waza NP on 16 Nov. All other Yellow Wagtails recorded (125+) were of the *flava/thunbergi* complex. Louette (1981) does not mention *feldegg* from Cameroon, but it is common in northeastern Nigeria and at Lake Chad (Keith *et al.* 1992), so its occurrence in northern Cameroon is to be expected.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

Two in Waza NP on 16 Nov; the third definite record from Waza and Cameroon (Louette 1981).

AFRICAN PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla aguimp*

Two at a bridge across the Bénoué River in Bénoué NP on 19 Nov. Louette (1981) mentions only one record from the Bénoué Plain.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Two records from the Bénoué Plain: one seen north of Garoua on 14 Nov and two in Bénoué NP on 19 Nov. Louette (1981) mentioned

only records from the Adamawa Plateau but expected the species to turn up elsewhere.

RED-THROATED PIPIT *Anthus cervinus*

Four seen on Plaine due Tchad north of Waza on 17 Nov, and one in Bénoué NP on 19 Nov. There are few previous records in Cameroon (Louette 1981, Robertson 1992), all from the north.

ISABELLINE WHEATEAR *Oenanthe isabellina*

Two seen in Waza NP on 17 Nov represent the first from Cameroon. The species winters in the Sahel zone across Africa (Keith *et al.* 1992) and its occurrence in the extreme north of Cameroon is not unexpected.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

A female in Waza NP on 15 Nov. Louette (1981) presumed the species to be regular in the north, but the only definite records he mentions are two November specimens.

ISABELLINE SHRIKE *Lanius isabellinus*

One on Plaine du Tchad north of Waza on 17 Nov is apparently the first record from Cameroon. Louette (1981) regarded this as a subspecies of *L. collurio*; the only definite records he mentions are specimens from across the border in Chad, but he presumed it to be regular in Cameroon.

WOODCHAT SHRIKE *Lanius senator*

An adult on Plaine du Tchad north of Waza and one immature in Waza NP, both on 17 Nov. There are few records from Cameroon (Louette 1981), but these records together with those of Robertson (1992) suggest that the species is regular at Waza and probably elsewhere in the north.

MASKED SHRIKE *Lanius nubicus*

In Waza NP one was seen on 15 Nov and two on 16 Nov. Singles were seen on Plaine du Tchad north of Waza on 17 Nov and between Waza and Maroua on 18 Nov. Previously only four records were known from Cameroon (Robertson 1992), all from Waza NP or nearby localities. The species is likely to be regular there.

[COLLARED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula albicollis*]

A female-type of a Palearctic *Ficedula* flycatcher at Bénoué NP on 19 Nov showed characters of the Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (Jonsson 1992). There are no other records of this species from Cameroon, but as the field identification of *Ficedula* species in female-type plumage is notoriously difficult we regard this record as only a 'probable'.

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